

For Immediate Release
June 8, 2004

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Senate acts to protect schools from governor's proposed funding cut

Plugging hole in school fund moved to top of budget priority list

LANSING – The state Senate today protected schools from a \$28-per-pupil funding cut proposed by the governor by transferring \$50.1 million from the General Fund to the School Aid Fund.

“Education is vitally important and we are not going to hamstring schools by cutting their budgets at the 11th hour,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema. “The Senate has proven it can be flexible and responsive when it comes to dealing with key priorities quickly. Today, those abilities shined through again.”

Gov. Jennifer Granholm threatened to cut per-pupil funding if the Legislature did not enact a cigarette-tax increase by June 15.

“Fifty million dollars is no small change but it is not a crisis,” said Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “The cigarette tax is a serious issue that needs to be addressed in a deliberative manner, not rushed forward to meet some artificial and unnecessary deadline.”

Senate Bill 1194 transfers \$50.1 million from the state's General Fund-General Purpose Budget to the School Aid Fund, filling a projected shortfall in school funding for the 2004 fiscal year budget.

Sikkema said the reduction in the General Fund/General Purpose budget would be addressed as lawmakers work to balance the 2004 and 2005 budgets.

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